

REMARKS

This paper is filed in response to the Office Action mailed 13th October 2009. Claims 1-7, 9, 14 - 21, 23 – 25 and 29 were pending in the application. Claims 1, 7, 14 and 29 have been amended. Claim 36 has been added. Therefore claims 1-7, 9, 14 - 21, 23 – 25, 29 and 36 are submitted herewith for reconsideration:

Amendments to the claims

Claims 1 and 14 have been amended to include reference to the presence of an isolation transformer at the workplace module. Basis for this feature is to be found in claim 29. Furthermore, the claim now refers to the presence of a transmitting station as being distinct from the workplace units. Basis for this feature is to be found in the last sentence on page 9 of the original specification.

New claim 36 finds basis in the original specification at page 15, second paragraph and on page 19, second paragraph.

No new matter is added by these amendments.

Objections to the claims

Claim 7 was objected to as being unclear. The present amendment removes reference to a first workplace. In the light of this amendment, the objection is believed to be moot.

Rejection of Claims 1-7, 9, 14 - 21, 23 – 25 and 29

Claims 1-7, 14-17, 19-21, 23 and 25 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Marais (WO00/68908). In response to this rejection, claims 1 and 14 have been amended to specifically incorporate the presence of an isolation transformer and a transmitting station. The Examiner has previously acknowledged that Marais fails to disclose an isolation transformer (see point 8 of the official action). In light of this amendment it is believed that the rejection of claims 1 and 14 and all claims dependent thereupon under 35 USC 102(b) is now moot.

Claim 29 was rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious over Marais (WO00/68908) in the light of Tsai US2005/0043859).

In the light of this rejection it is respectfully observed that the Examiner states that it would be obvious for the person of ordinary skill “to modify the UPS of Marais with the low

voltage isolation transformer, as taught by Tsai, in order to provide low voltage and to decouple the two sources thereby substantially reducing interference”. Marais however incorporates a single UPS 70 for providing uninterruptable power to the system 30 (see page 7, line 25 to 27 and Fig. 2). But if the UPS of Marais was exchanged or modified to include an isolation transformer, this would lead to a system having a single such isolation transformer. There is no teaching that would directly lead the person of ordinary skill to provide separate individual transformers for each workstation module.

It is noted that Tsai relates to the problem of providing a network of UPS modules arranged in parallel. It deals with issues of master/slave arbitration and role detection (see abstract). It is understood that the UPS modules must all be arranged on a common parallel control bus (PCB) in order for operation to be effective (see paragraph [0045]). Such an arrangement would appear to be quite unsuited to the situation disclosed in Marais.

Based on the above distinctions, we respectfully believe that the presently claimed arrangements according to claims 1, 14 and 29 are not achieved by any logical combination of the features of Marais and Tsai. As a result of the use of the isolation transformer as presently claimed, the workplace modules may be located at least partially within the confined space, allowing direct monitoring of activities and sensing of gases at the workplace. In the case of Marais, the cameras 16A to 16D are located outside the confined space (trained on the manholes – see page 4, lines 12, 13). So too are the sensors 24, which are arranged to detect movement around the entrance to the manhole (see page 5, lines 24, 25). Marais provides no teaching of any part of a workplace module as presently claimed being located within the confined space.

In addition to the above, the present claims include still further differences over Marais and Tsai as follows:

- claims 1 and 14 require a workplace module for each workplace, whereby the workplace module comprises a video registration device, an audio interface and a gas sensor. In the case of Marais, one remote central surveillance station (RCSS) 20 is provided to serve a plurality of workplaces 14A to 14D. As can be seen from Fig. 1, the RCSS has a plurality of cameras 16A to 16D, and a plurality of sensors 24, video plugs 26 and alarm plugs 22.

- claims 1 and 14 also require a single transmitting station for the plurality of workplace modules. Transmission from the plurality of modules can then be effectively bundled for communication with the monitoring unit. In the case of Marais, each RCSS 20A – 20N communicates directly with a central control station 32.

As a result of the above differences, Applicant's believe that there is an appreciable improvement in versatility, set-up speed and security. Due to the fact that Marais includes sensors, cameras and plugs for different workplaces connected to a common RCSS, significantly greater set-up care and attention would be required to ensure that each manhole is independently observed. During set-up, care would be needed to ensure that the video registration for one manhole was not confused with the access sensor for another location. According to the presently claimed arrangement, a selectively configurable workplace module may be located adjacent (and partially within the confined space of) each workplace. Each workplace module may thus be associated with an individual address (e.g. a TCP/IP address) allowing the central monitoring unit to individually identify the workplace and its associated sensors.

Applicant believes that such a configuration is neither known nor obvious in the light of any of the citations presently relied upon by the Examiner. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 1 and 14 based on the above arguments is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-7, 9, 15 - 21, 23 - 25 are dependent upon claims 1 and 14 and are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons.

Claim 29 also requires that each individual workplace module is provided with data interfaces, thus having the ability to individually transmit data associated with that module and the individual workplace with which it is associated.

New claim 36 includes the additional feature that each workstation unit is adapted to transmit data to the safety monitoring system under Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). Such an arrangement allows the workplace to be identified by a unique IP address allowing improved set-up versatility as discussed above.

Based on the above, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdrawal the rejection and allow claims 29 and 26.

Extension of Time

Any extension of time that may be deemed necessary to further the prosecution of this application is hereby requested.

Authorization to Charge Fees

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 08-3038, referencing the docket number shown above.

Authorization to Communicate via email

Pursuant to MPEP 502.03, authorization is hereby given to the USPTO to communicate with Applicant's representative concerning any subject matter of this application by electronic mail. I understand that a copy of these communications will be made of record in the application file. Applicant's representative, David P. Owen, can be reached at email address owend@howrey.com.

Should issue of a final rejection be considered, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone at the number given below or by email to owend@howrey.com in order to schedule a telephone interview.

Respectfully submitted,

/david p owen/

David P. Owen
Reg. No. 43,344

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Customer No. 32,894
Howrey LLP
2941 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 200
Falls Church, VA 22042
Fax: 202-383-7195
Tel: 9-011-31-20-592-4411